

Challenging Christians to Pray



Prayergram®

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THE POWER OF SOLITUDE

“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he (Jesus) went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there he prayed” (Mark 1:35).

In the dictionary, the word ‘solitude’ means, the state of being alone or the state of being in seclusion. Solitude can also be used as ‘personal reflection’, or ‘looking within ourselves’ through the prism of God. In some evangelical circles, ‘solitude’ is commonly associated with monastic life and religious vocations in monasteries. Consequently, this word is rarely employed in contemporary Christian discourse. Those who want to deepen their relationship with the Lord should consistently set aside quiet moments alone with God, free from worldly distractions. Spending time alone with God is considered a valuable and blessed experience for all those who follow Christ.

Today, more than ever, people in general are seeking a sympathetic ear and do not find it among many of us who profess to be Christians, because we are always talking when we should be listening. We lend a helping hand to our brothers and sisters when we make a sincere effort to listen to them. Many in ministry often think their only duty is to preach and teach, overlooking the value of listening to others. Real compassion is the capacity to ‘weep’ with those who weep and ‘rejoice’ with those who rejoice. God’s Word tells us in **Romans 12: 15**, “**Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.**” We need our brothers and sisters more than they need us. The profound words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the martyred Christian, “Christians who can no longer listen to one another will soon no longer be listening to God either; they will always be talking even in the presence of God. The death of the spiritual life starts here, and in the end, there is nothing left but empty spiritual chatter and clerical condescension which chokes on pious words. We should listen with ears of God, so that we can speak the Word of God.”

In an age of technology and social media, we see a steady decline in human interactions. God became human, not a machine, to identify with suffering humanity. I am so thankful that we are not measured by an automation, but by a loving Savior who wept. It is amazing how many hours of ‘screen time’ we spend on social media, yet we have no time to fellowship with our Loving Savior. I have heard all the excuses from Christians for not having time for communion with our Lord. Spiritual discernment is attained not by those who create disturbance and endless chaos, but by individuals who engage in patient and expectant reflection before the Lord. Think of our Savior before the screaming mob, being struck, spat upon, and yet saying not a word—not a word. Despite all the insult, Jesus remained calm and composed while exhibiting divine power and self-control. Silence is rare in today’s noisy society, yet it opens the pathway to hear the gentle voice of the Father. We should welcome His divine presence and listen quietly for His gentle voice! True worship is from the inside out.

As automation rises, people crave for real connection but often rely on questionable sources to fill emotional voids. It seems our society is engaged in much talking without communicating, hearing without grasping and endless deliberation without any meaningful resolution. In my humble opinion, life without God is a restless life because true rest comes by resting upon the faithful One, the Lord Jesus Christ. To live a satisfying life with real purpose and meaning one must decide what is relevant and eternal in life. God is the greatest reality in life and in Him alone we are complete. Someone describes this life as a **“rat race, but when it’s all over, who wants to smell like a rat?”** It’s nearly impossible to avoid people who exercise no discipline or discretion when it comes to the power of the tongue; they do not grasp that words have consequences, and no wonder they act and behave like loose cannons. Someone has said, **“He who guards his lips guards his heart.”** The Word of God tells us in **Ecclesiastes 5:1-2**, **“KEEP thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore, let thy words be few.”** The remarkable strength of a Christian lies in his desire to be alone with God in the secret place of ‘solitude’ as he enjoys God’s divine presence.

Those who live a quiet life are marginalized by a society that caters to the noisy crowd. In our culture of rowdiness, idle talk has gained much notoriety. Whatever has happened to real silence, real stillness, and really biting one’s tongue? The profound words of Thomas A. Kempis come to mind, **“No one speaks more confidently than the one who gladly remains silent.”** A person who is assured of God’s presence possesses the capacity to communicate about Him appropriately when it is necessary. Every conversation should have some validity, some relevance, and some spiritual value. Let us not waste our time dabbling in trivialities and harmful conversations! Today much of our conversation centers on nothing—it is idle talk, meaningless talk, and talk that does not honor God. The Word of God tells us, **“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Proverbs 25:11)**. The current approval of obscenity level in America illustrates an embarrassing trend: the subjugation of wholesome language and plain decency to a vociferous and outspoken few whose vocabulary is very soiled and non-inspiring.

I recall reading about the British author Charles Lamb and his sister Mary, who was hospitalized due to a rare illness. Charles Lamb, Mary’s famous brother would go to the asylum in the early morning, or in the late evening, to take her out for a walk through the English countryside. They said nothing to each other, just walked the gloomy way, hand in hand, speechless and weeping, no criticism, no moralizing, and no lectures, just Christian love and fellowship. When Charles Lamb gave his hand of fellowship to his afflicted sister, he showed compassion and shared in her suffering. We are always using the clumsy instrument of speech to get our point across. That’s the peril of sermons, lectures, movies and television. We don’t have to talk all the time for the sake of talking. **“Blessed are they that mourn,”** who have the capacity to pray without words. Tears are the loving expression of a caring heart, and I call it, **“The language of the heart.”** The world needs to see the gentleness of our character and the firmness of our resolve more so than to hear our speeches. There was a time in our church services, people went forward and knelt at the altar to transact matters of the heart before the Lord; but nowadays such sight is rarely seen. Today, we are well connected to technology and often prefer using our devices over listening or waiting for spiritual guidance. Some might call me old-fashioned, but there’s no shame in shedding tears for a world that’s still hostile to Christ and His message.

Jesus went up into a mountain apart to pray: **“...And when the evening was come, he was there alone” (Matthew 14:23)**. Solitude is not well known to many in our generation that thrives on speed and endless activities. Oh, the rush, the hurry, the clamor, the noise, and the nervousness, all point to a life of trauma and turmoil as society plunges into an abyss. Inner strength does not reside in bluster and noise; it lies in solitude and quietness. For instance, lions and eagles are solitary animals; lions typically hunt independently, while eagles fly alone and do not form

flocks. The Word of God tells us, **“... In quietness and in confidence shall be thy strength...” (Isaiah 30:15)** It seems that we have lost the capacity to sit at the feet of our Lord in hallowed solitude.

Millions of words are spoken and printed daily; much of what we utter and write are unnecessary, and hurtful. But on the other hand, what is useful, inspiring and uplifting can be said in a few thoughtful words without shouting insults on others. Loose lips always create problems, so we need to control its use. The world does its best to alienate us from our God, and our faith is tested daily. As a result, character erodes, hope fades away, and faith disappears. Disillusionment and cynicism often arise when moral values decline, and spirituality diminishes.

The message of encouragement is not always expressed in mere words, it is made relevant and meaningful as a heart consciousness. Seeking hearts always crave for moments of stillness and quietness. God does some of His best work in us in soul-travail. Do you know anyone from past or present being greatly used of God who did not go through some period of solitude and waiting time. For instance, Moses spent 40 days on the Mountain with God: Elijah on Mt. Horeb, and the apostle Paul three years in the Arabian desert. Ezekiel, the prophet was driven to the plain to receive a message from God. **“And the hand of the LORD was there upon me, and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee” (Ezekiel 3:22)**. God wanted Ezekiel to be away from the bluster and noise where he could experience God’s majestic presence. The prophet was so overcome by the presence of God that he fell to the ground, face down. Is there a moment in our lives when we felt God’s presence so deeply, powerful and awe-inspiring? John Bunyan spent twelve years incarcerated in Bedford jail, Bedford, England, during that time he developed his acclaimed work, The Pilgrim’s Progress. Being in God’s presence is not a waste of time. There is no short-cut to a life of intimacy with the Lord, which is the hallmark of someone who lives in God. To have a closer walk with God, one must yield himself to the prompting of the precious Holy Spirit. God has a way of speaking to us in quiet and splendid isolation.

Silence is simply too powerful to blithely wish away. Always remember that wholesome speech is a source of comfort and healing to all those who hear it. So, let speech serve us, not control us! Silence is often more eloquent than speech. Rely less on words and more on deeds. Let our faith be less of a show and more of a living reality! Someone has very wisely said, “The tongue is a window to the heart.”

A truly wise person is the one who has mastered the art of solitude!

---**Matthew Skariah**

GOD USES BROKEN VESSELS

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou will not despise” (Psalms 51:17).

Today, in our success and reward-oriented society, we look upon ‘broken things’ with dislike and disdain; but God looks upon broken things with delight. Only when God’s people are broken and heavy-hearted for our condition and the state of the nation, and the world in general we can expect a sweeping revival that puts God in the center of our lives and behavior. No great revival ever began without true repentance and brokenness.

Our trouble lies in our refusal to be broken and contrite. God builds His kingdom with those who surrender to Christ, using imperfect people. Heaven is filling with earth’s broken lives, and there is no ‘broken lives’ that Christ cannot fix and restore to bring about His glory. He can take

a life that is crushed by pain, sorrow, disappointment, defeat and misfortune and make it into a life of praise and honor. The words of J.R. Miller, a prolific author, come to mind, **“He can lift earth’s saddest failure up to heaven’s glory.”**

Perhaps, you’re bruised by your circumstances, but remember, Christ is greater than all our trials and failures. Moses had to face the failure of his past to prepare for his future. The past is forgiven, the present is nurtured with God’s unending love, and the future seems bright with hope because of God’s enduring faithfulness. No one is more loving, caring and compassionate than our Lord. No matter whatever happens or comes our way, we are safe and secure in the arms of our beloved Savior! Take courage dear ones and be strong in His mighty power. Let us **“cast all our burdens and cares on Him”** because **He cares for us.** **“Bear ye one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal.6:2).** As Christ bears our burdens, we ought to bear the burdens of our brothers and sisters. What a blessed Savior we love, worship, and serve! There is none like our Lord Who carries us on eagle’s wings!

A PRAYER FOR PERSONAL CLEANSING

Lord, work on me, work on every smudge, every stain, every form of carnality and pride, that might dim and flicker your light and glory. Lord, let me view life from your perspective and free me from what displeases you. Master, please don’t let thy glory ever depart from me! Thank you Lord for answering my prayer! Amen!

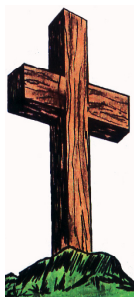
---Matthew Skariah

VOICE FROM THE PAST..

“A spiritually-minded person will never come to you with the demand— **“believe this and that”**; but he will ask that you align and measure your life with the standards of Jesus. Submit yourself to His yoke, and his alone; and always be careful never to place a yoke on others that is not of Jesus Christ. Don’t get impatient with others. Remember how God dealt with you—with patience and with gentleness. But never water down the truth of God. Let it have its way and never apologize for it. Jesus said, **“Go... and make disciples...” (Matthew 28:19)**, not, **“Make converts to your own thoughts and opinions.”**

---Oswald Chambers (1874-1917)

Scottish evangelical teacher and minister
Author of the famous devotional book,
“My Utmost for His Highest.”



The WPB Ministries

PRAYER IS THE MIGHTIEST FORCE -- 2 Chronicles 7:14

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